Sweepers' Strike

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HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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FASTING IN THE AIR

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

"Fasting has become a veritable epidemic. The blame lies at your door." So writes a correspondent and adds: "One can understand the efficacy of a fast for purposes of inward purification as also for the outward. But fasts are undertaken nowadays for an increment in one's own pay or in that of one's group, for being selected as a candidate for the Assembly or for various other causes. You encourage one man for fasting for the removal of untouchability and yet you are willing to let another die who is doing the same for a different cause. Is this not injustice? Should you not lay down rules as to when to fast and when not to, what should be its duration, should fruit juices be taken or only water? You talk of the inner voice where you are concerned. Would it not really be best if you were to stop undertaking fasts yourself and stop others too?"

There is force in the above argument. It is, however, impossible to lay down rules. Experience alone can suggest rules. In particular cases it is open to a person to frame his own law or he can refer to me, if he believes me to be an authority. I have had the temerity to claim that fasting is an infallible weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha. I have used it myself, being the author of Satyagraha. Anyone whose fast is related to Satyagraha should seek my permission and obtain it in writing before embarking on it. If this advice is followed, there is no need for framing rules, at any rate, in my lifetime.

One general principle, however, I would like to enunciate. A Satyagrahi should fast only as a last resort when all other avenues of redress have been explored and have failed. There is no room for imitation in fasts. He who has no inner strength should not dream of it, and never with attachment to success. But if a Satyagrahi once undertakes a fast from conviction, he must stick to his resolve whether there is a chance of his action bearing fruit or not. This does not mean that fasting cannot or can bear fruit. He who fasts in the expectation of fruit generally fails. And even if he does not seemingly fail, he loses all the inner joy which a true fast holds.

Whether one should take fruit juices or not depends on one's physical powers of endurance. But no more fruit juice than is absolutely necessary for the body should be taken. He probably has the greatest inner strength who takes only water.

It is wrong to fast for selfish ends, e. g. for increase in one's own salary. Under certain circumstances it is permissible to fast for an increase in wages on behalf of one's group.

Ridiculous fasts spread like plague and are harmful. But when fasting becomes a duty it cannot be given up. Therefore I do fast when I consider it to be necessary and cannot abstain from it on any score. What I do myself I cannot prevent others from doing under similar circumstances. It is common knowledge that the best of good things are often abused. We see this happening every day.

New Delhi, 13-4-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

QUESTION BOX

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Q. On what principle is the question of the salaries of ministers in Congress majority provinces going to be settled this time? Does the Karachi resolution in this regard still hold? If the question is to be settled on the basis of the present high prices is it possible, within the limits of their revenues, for the provincial budgets to increase the pays of all their servants threefold? If not, will it be proper for the ministers to be paid Rs. 1500/- while a *chaprasi* or a teacher is told to make two ends meet on Rs. 15/- and 12/- p. m. and not make a fuss about it because Congress has to run the administration?

A. The question is apt. Why should a minister draw Rs. 1500/- and a *chaprasi* or a teacher Rs. 15/- p. m.? But the question cannot be solved by the mere raising of it. Such differences have existed for ages. Why should an elephant require an enormous quantity of food and a mere grain suffice for the ant? The question carries its own answer. God gives to each one according to his need. If we could as definitely know the variations in the needs of men as those of the elephant and the ant, no doubts would arise. Experience tells us that differences in requirements do exist in society. But we do not know the law governing them. All therefore that is possible today is to try to reduce the differences as far as possible. The reduction can be brought about by peaceful agitation and by the creation of public opinion. It cannot be done by force or by *duragraha* in the name of Satyagraha. The ministers are the people's men. Their wants even before they took office were not those of *chaprasis*. I would love to see a *chaprasi* become worthy of holding the office of a minister and yet not increase his needs. It should also be clearly understood that no ministers need draw up to the maximum of the salary fixed.

It is worth while pondering over one thing that arises out of the questions. Is it possible for the *chaprasi* to support himself and his family on Rs. 15/- p. m. without taking bribes? Should he not be

given enough to keep him above temptation? The remedy for this is that as far as possible we should be our own *chaprasis*. But even so if we need them we must pay them enough for their requirements. In this way the big gulf that exists between minister and *chaprasi* will be bridged.

It is another matter as to why the pay of the ministers has been raised from Rs. 500/- to 1500/- p. m. But this is nothing as compared with, and does not solve, the main problem. With the solution of the latter it will *ipso facto* be solved.

New Delhi, 14-4-'46

(From *Harijansevak*)

THE SACRED WEEK

The following is the text of Gandhiji's Hindustani speech at the prayer gathering on the evening of the 6th of April:

"Twentyseven years ago when the late Swami Shraddhanandji was alive, Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act was inaugurated on this day. History was made during the following week. For the first time the entire masses of India from one end to the other rose like one man. It was an entirely spontaneous demonstration.

"That was the time when Hindus and Muslims for the time forgot all their differences. The Ali Brothers and I used to go all over the country together like blood-brothers. We spoke with one voice and delivered the message of Hindu-Muslim unity and Swaraj to the masses. We resolved that thereafter we should address our prayers to God alone instead of the British Government and so Satyagraha was born in India. The Ali Brothers readily fell in with the programme of a national day of fasting and prayer. People fasted on the 6th and 13th of April. They realized that they were all children of the one God, destined to live together and die together in the land of their birth, which was India. They assembled together in their thousands and offered prayers in temples, churches and mosques. The climax was reached when in Delhi a monster gathering consisting of both Hindus and Musalmans was held in the Juma mosque and was addressed by the late Swami Shraddhanand. It was a glorious day in India's history, the memory of which we shall always treasure."

Now they had fallen upon evil times, proceeded Gandhiji. The hearts of Hindus and Musalmans were sundered. The air was poisoned with communal bitterness and rancour. A section of the Musalmans had begun to claim that they are a separate nation. Into the logic of that claim he would not go at present, he said. He confessed that it baffled his understanding.

The speaker added: "We commenced our proceedings today with prayer. If we believe in prayer we cannot fly at one another's throat, or regard anybody as our enemy. At Amritsar people lost their heads. But we promptly confessed our mistake and made expiation for it by fasting and praying to God for forgiveness. To err is human. By confessing we convert our mistakes into stepping stones for advance. On the contrary, a person who tries to hide his mistakes becomes a living fraud and sinks down. Man is neither brute nor God but a creature of God striving to realize his divinity. Repentance and self-purification are the means. The moment we repent and ask God for forgiveness for our lapse we are purged of our sin and new life begins for us. True repentance is an essential prerequisite of prayer.

"Prayer is not mere lip service. It must express itself through action. How shall we then pray during the Sacred Week? We can pray by purging our hearts of any taint of communal hatred and ill will that might be lurking there and invoking God's aid for the same. Achievement of communal harmony would thus be one form of prayer. Then we can pray by doing sacrificial spinning for the attainment of non-violent Swaraj. I have a vivid recollection of how in 1919 every home in the Punjab hummed with the music of the spinning wheel. A mountain of yarn was presented to me on one occasion during my tour, which was never eqalled before, nor has it been since except recently at Madura during my Madras tour. What are the sisters of Punjab doing today? That is the question which you must ask yourselves during this week of introspection. If the four hundred millions of India took to spinning in earnest, and span for sacrifice, i. e. not for self, with the name of God in their hearts and with the common purpose of winning India's freedom through non-violence, their united effort would not only bring us freedom assuredly, but also provide us the means for safeguarding it after it is won and enable us to point the way out of darkness to the whole world.

"The other day I was talking to the I. N. A. men in the Red Fort. We were discussing as to what they should do on their release. They assured me that they would on their release serve India as true soldiers of non-violence under the Congress flag. I told them that today a true soldier of India is he who spins to clothe the naked and tills the soil to grow more food to meet the threatening food crisis. The Congress has declared that she would carry on the struggle for India's independence through the method of non-violence. But she has not yet decided whether she would adhere to that method for the protection of that freedom against possible foreign aggression. To me it is a self-evident truth that if freedom is to be shared equally by all — even physically the weakest, the lame and the halt — they must be able to contribute an equal share in its defence. How that can be possible when reliance is placed on armaments my plebeian mind fails to understand. I therefore swear and shall continue to swear by non-violence, i. e. by Satyagraha or soul force. In it physical incapacity is no handicap and even a frail woman or a child can pit herself or himself on equal terms against a giant, armed with the most powerful weapons.

"The eighteen-fold constructive programme with the spinning wheel as its centre is the concrete expression of that spirit in organized society. Let us realize that spirit by devoting ourselves prayerfully to the carrying out of the constructive programme during the National Week."

New Delhi, 15-4-'46 PYARELAL

WEEKLY LETTER

THE WAY TO DO IT

The visit to I. N. A. prisoners in Kabul Lines about which I wrote last week was followed by a similar visit by Gandhiji to some thirtyfive I. N. A. prisoners who are detained in the Red Fort. What particularly delighted him during both these visits was to see so many officers and men representing so many different religions and races of India drawn together in a common cause — the cause of India's freedom — and living together like members of one family. It was like a whiff of fresh invigorating air from the free India that is to be. The absence of the third party had enabled them to obliterate all communal distinctions and develop a perfect spirit of camaraderie in exile, but in detention those distinctions were again being brought home to them.

"We never felt any distinction of creed or religion in the I. N. A.," remarked one of them. "But here we are faced with 'Hindu tea' and 'Musalman tea'. What are we to do?"

"Why do you suffer it?" asked Gandhiji, half seriously, half in banter.

"No, we do not," they replied. "We mix 'Hindu tea' and 'Musalman tea' exactly half and half, and then serve. The same with food."

"That is very good," replied Gandhiji laughing, pleased with their ingenuity.

Summing up his reactions of his second visit, Gandhiji in the course of his remarks at the evening prayer narrated how Col. Niranjan Singh, speaking for the I. N. A. prisoners in the Red Fort, had told him that they were finally convinced that India could not win or retain her independence except through non-violence. They had further assured him that after their release they would serve India as true soldiers of non-violence. "We shall disdain to depend on anybody's charity for our support," they had told him. "We would rather dig the ground and till the land than compromise our self-respect by living on subscriptions."

"I told them," said Gandhiji, "that they would be sadly disillusioned if they thought that a free India would be able to provide them all those emoluments, honours and perquisites which a foreign government gave to the army men by the exploitation of the masses, while education, public health and the allied nation-building activities were starved. India was a poor country, her children were born in poverty and grew up in poverty into anaemic, stunted specimens of humanity. If they wanted to become true soldiers of India they must be prepared to share her destitution and try to ameliorate it to the best of their capacity, not expect to be pampered at the cost of the poor. A true soldier would prefer death to charity."

"In reply," continued Gandhiji, "they assured me that Netaji had inculcated upon them the twin lessons of poverty and equality. 'Among us, officer and men live together and dine together without any distinction. There is no high, no low.'"

A MESSAGE FOR THE I. N. A.

Sardar Ramsing Rawal whose note on "Communal unity and non-untouchability in the I. N. A." has appeared in "Harijan" already saw Gandhiji the other day and asked him what his message for the I. N. A. was. Gandhiji's reply covered not only the I. N. A. but all Indian army men. Although the I. N. A. men had declared open rebellion under Netaji's lead the spirit of rebellion was not confined to them. It had permeated even the Indian Army ranks. Some of the latter had seen him at Poona and sought his advice. Gandhiji had told them that it was open to them to give notice to the authorities that though they were in their pay, their loyalty was mortgaged to India, not to the King of England. Hitherto they had yielded obedience to military orders and been prepared even to shoot down their countrymen to order. But now that the spirit of independence had taken possession of them they would do so no more under a foreign Government's orders.

For the I. N. A. men there were two alternatives. They could serve free India as soldiers-in-arms or they could convert themselves into soldiers of non-violence if they were convinced that non-violence was the higher and the more efficacious way. They should make use of their training and discipline to introduce non-violent organization among the masses, learn spinning and become veteran constructive workers. If they did that, they would set a glorious example to the whole world.

"The I. N. A. men," observed Gandhiji, "have shown great strength, heroism and resourcefulness. But I must confess that their achievements have not dazzled my eyes. To die without killing requires more heroism. There is nothing very wonderful in killing and being killed in the process. But the man who offers his neck to the enemy for execution but refuses to bend to his will shows courage of a far higher type.

"Troublous times lie ahead of us. Our non-violence has brought us to the gate of independence. Shall we renounce it after we have entered that gate? I for one am firmly convinced that non-violence of the brave, such as I have envisaged, provides the surest and most efficacious means to face foreign aggression and internal disorder just as it has done for winning independence." The British were going to quit What place would India have in the comity of nations? Would she be satisfied with being a fifth-rate power like China? China was independent only in name. India would have long to wait before she could become a first-class military power. "And for that she would have to go under the tutelage of some Western power. A truly non-violent India will have nothing to fear from any foreign power nor will it look to British navy and air force for her defence. I know that we have not as yet the non-violence of the brave."

New Delhi, 16-4-'46 PYARELAL

HARIJAN

April 21 1946

SWEEPERS' STRIKE

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

There are certain matters in which strikes would be wrong. Sweepers' grievances come in this category. I do not want to go into others here. My opinion against sweepers' strikes dates back to about 1897 when I was in Durban. A general strike was mooted there and the question arose as to whether scavengers should join in it. My vote was registered against the proposal. Just as man cannot live without air so too he cannot exist for long if his home and surroundings are not clean. One or other epidemic is bound to break out especially when modern drainage is put out of action.

Therefore I was perturbed when I read about the sweepers' strike in Bombay. Fortunately it has come to an end. I understand, however, that the sweepers, both men and women, refused to submit their case to arbitration.

In spite of my close attachment to sweepers, better because of it, I must denounce the coercive methods they are said to have employed. They will thereby be losers in the long run. City folk will not always be cowed down. If they were, it would mean the collapse of municipal administration. Coercion cannot but result in the end in chaos. An impartial tribunal for settling disputes should always be accepted. Refusal is a sign of weakness. A *bhangi* may not give up his work even for a day. And there are many other ways open to him of securing justice.

Townspeople should, on the other hand, forget that there is such a thing as untouchability and learn the art of cleaning their own and the city's drains, so that if a similar occasion arises they are not non-plussed and can render the necessary temporary service. They may not be coerced. I go so far as to say that the military who know this work should be used for such emergency. If Swaraj is round the bend, we can now look upon the military as ours and need have no hesitation in taking all the constructive work we can from them. Up till now they have only been employed in indiscriminate firing on us. Today they must plough the land, dig wells, clean latrines and do every other constructive work that they can, and thus turn the people's hatred of them into love.

Now that the *hartal* is at an end, it is the duty of everyone to stretch out the hand of fellowship to the *bhangis*, educate them, see that they are properly housed, permit them, like anyone else, to live wherever they choose, look in the matter of an equitable wage for them and see that justice is meted out to them without their having to demand it. If this is done throughout India we shall definitely prove ourselves worthy of Swaraj and be able also to maintain it. New Delhi, 15-4-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

WHAT ABOUT WOMEN?

(*By* M. *K. Gandhi*)

"I am glad to read your reply to the complaint that enough women have not been put up for elections or selected for official posts. You reply that merit should be the only criterion in the choice of candidates. Your dictum is perfectly correct and every thinking man and woman will agree with it. There is a saying that "neither age nor sex but merit alone should be the object of adoration." The reality, however, is far from the truth. You are not unaware that the maxim is everywhere observed in the breach. Neither in the ministries and legislatures, nor in local bodies is merit given first consideration in the matter of selection of candidates. Considerations of caste, community and province come into the picture and are the determining factors. The argument proffered in favour of such action is that none of these interests can be ignored. If the argument holds, what about the interests of women? In view of the maxim does not the basis of selection need clarification?"

The above is from the letter of an esteemed sister. The sister's argument boils down to this, that where everything is on a wrong basis another wrong will not matter. But if we go on thus, the evil will grow and we shall be hopelessly caught in a vicious circle. My appeal to women, therefore, is that they should intelligently become the personification of renunciation and thereby not only adorn but also raise the status of their sex and the nation.

So long as considerations of caste and community continue to weigh with us and rule our choice, women will be well advised to remain aloof and thereby build up their prestige. The question is as to how best this can be done. Today few women take part in politics and most of these do not do independent thinking. They are content to carry out their parents' or their husbands' behests. Realizing their dependence they cry out for women's rights. Instead of doing this, however, women workers should enroll women as voters, impart or have imparted to them practical education, teach them to think independently, release them from the chains of caste that bind them so as to bring about a change in them which will compel men to realize woman's strength and capacity for sacrifice and give her places of honour. If they will do this they will purify the present unclean atmosphere. So much for women.

As to men, they should consider it their duty to come out of the impure atmosphere wherever it exists. They will not be guided by considerations of caste and community if these are banished from their own minds. The best and easiest way to achieve this is for both men and women to stoop to conquer by becoming Harijans and that too of the last class, i. e. *bhangis* or *mehtars*.

Where capable women have been left out men should make amends. It is their duty to give such encouragement to women as will enable them to outshine men. If both parties act as suggested the atmosphere will soon become pure. Whether men do so or not, women's duty is, to my mind, clear.

New Delhi, 12-4-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

A MINISTER'S WOE

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Dr. Katju sends the following note:

"Owing to the comparative failure of winter crops in many parts of India, there is a widespread apprehension about serious food shortage in the country. In order to afford equal opportunity to the rich and the poor alike regarding food supplies, rationing has been introduced in many urban areas in the United Provinces. Rationing entails responsibility on the Government to feed the inhabitants in such areas. The apprehended scarcity is so severe that the U. P. rations have been cut down to the barest minimum viz., six *chhataks* of cereals. This includes 2 *chs.* of wheat, 2 *chs.* rice and 2 *chs.* of mixed *atta*. Mixed *atta* is not generally liked by the people and any further reduction in rations is almost impossible. To feed the urban areas, continuous supplies from the villages is an evident necessity. The Government of India has suggested to Provincial Governments that in order to ensure continuous supplies, it would be desirable to enforce compulsory levies on agricultural produce in surplus districts, i. e. in districts where it is expected that the produce exceeds the requirements of the rural area concerned. This question of a compulsory levy is greatly agitating the public mind. It is said that the control price fixed by the Government is too low and should be raised. The answer to that is, that the price structure is an all-India affair and it is not possible to raise the price in any particular province without affecting the structure as a whole. Furthermore, the control price in the United Provinces has been fixed at Rs. 10-4 per maund of 40 *seers* which is not really a low price. It is sufficiently remunerative and makes due allowance for the rise in costs of cultivation and general living. Formerly in pre-War days wheat used to sell at about 13 *seers* a rupee; the control price is 4 *seers*. Supplies being apprehended to be much less than the demand, there is bound to be a black market where selfish people can buy foodstuffs at higher prices to satisfy their individual needs. No compulsion would be necessary if cultivators realize that it is their social and patriotic duty to do their utmost to feed their brothers and sisters in urban areas, and also landless people living in the rural areas. The cultivator is in every sense of the word the *Anna-data* and I ask you to appeal to him at this critical juncture not to hoard, not to sell in the black market but to supply in the greatest measure possible to the Government stores, so that food may be distributed equitably and equally to all people, rich and poor alike and hunger and destitution may be avoided. Your voice goes far and wide and I therefore appeal to you to take up this work. Very many schemes have been considered for the purpose of ensuring adequate supplies in our urban areas, but whatever the proposals may be, the net result is that in every case the cultivator is asked to part with his grain. Unless the consumers in rural and urban areas are fed, there are bound to be disturbances of every kind. We are doing our very best to encourage the 'Grow More Food' and 'Grow More Vegetables' campaigns in the United Provinces. The various suggestions made by you have all been adopted. Instructions have been issued to plough all Government lands in Government buildings etc. Private owners have also been offered expert advice and are being given facilities by the supply of free seeds and free water from irrigation channels. Assistance in the digging of wells has also been given. After all is said and done, without public co-operation little progress can be made and co-operation must take the form of the *Anna-data* giving the gift of food grains to the utmost of his capacity."

This note from Dr. Katju is worthy of close attention by the Kisan and his guides as also urban people. The impending calamity can be turned to good use. Then it will be a blessing in disguise. Otherwise, curse it is and curse it will remain.

Dr. Katju writes as a responsible minister. Therefore, people can either make or mar him. They can remove him and replace him by a better. But so long as ministers of the people's choice are in office as their servants, the people have to carry out their instructions. Every breach of law or instructions is not *satyagraha*. It can easily be *duragraha* rather than *satyagraha*.

New Delhi, 14-4-'46

INDIAN PRESSMEN v. EUROPEAN

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

An Indian journalist complains that our great men have a weakness for foreign journalists to the extent of excluding Indians at their press conferences, and wonders whether I am myself free from this weakness. For myself, I can say without fear of contradiction that I have never been guilty of such partiality. Having suffered a good deal for the crime of being an Asiatic, I am not likely to be guilty of such weakness. And I must say that I know of no such example as my friend adverts to, if only because public men can ill afford to face a boycott by Indian Pressmen. What has happened with me and, so far as I am aware, with others too is that they and I have found it necessary at times to give special interviews to foreign journalists when it has been found necessary in the interest of the common cause to get messages across the seas. It is impossible in the present circumstances to do otherwise. It would be as foolish to invite a boycott by foreign journalists as by Indian. Any industrious person will find out that Indian journalists have been more often than not preferred by Indian public men again for the sake of the common cause. As a fellow journalist I would urge journalists, whether Indian or foreign to prefer their particular causes to their own or their employers' pockets or to descending to recriminations or personalities.

New Delhi,
14-4-'46

SHELLEY'S PROPHETIC VISION

When Shelley was living in Italy, he received with indignation the news of the Manchester Massacre in which unarmed English weavers stood at bay against the yeomanry and suffered in consequence. 'The great truth that the many, if accordant and resolute, could control the few, . . . made him long to teach his injured countrymen how to resist', as Mrs. Shelley tells us. Shelley therefore wrote the *Mask of Anarchy* in which he unfolded his scheme of non-violent rebellion.

Shelley pictured first the slavery of the common man in England in those days. He had to work hard, but received such low wages that he could barely keep himself alive for the benefit of the 'tyrants'. He had to work at 'loom and plough and sword and spade', but the fruits of his labour were not for him to enjoy and he defended his masters but not himself. His ill-fed and ill-clothed wife and children

'. . . are dying whilst I speak,
When the winter winds are bleak.'

He cast longing eyes on the food that the rich man in his riot cast to his fat dogs. He was paid in paper currency, 'the ghost of gold' for which he had to toil infinitely harder than people groaning under the tyrannies of old toiled for its substance. 'Paper coin' is characterized by Shelley as

'that forgery
Of the title-deeds, which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.'

English people had become slaves in soul, had no wills of their own and were

'All that others make of ye.'

And when at last the worm turned, and they ventured to complain

'with a murmur weak and vain',

'the tyrants' crew rode over their wives and them, and blood was on the grass like dew.' Even savage men or 'wild beasts within a den' would not put up with that sort of oppression, to which however they were utter strangers.

After this Shelley gave English people an idea of the promised land of Freedom to which he would lead them, but where was the path to that New Jerusalem? In answer to this question Shelley revealed his splendid vision of mass Satyagraha.

'The blue sky overhead,
The green earth on which ye tread',

all that was eternal must witness the solemnity. From every nook and corner of England, from every hut, village or town,

'Where those who live and suffer moan
For others' misery or their own,'

let there be a vast assembly of men, and let them declare with 'measured words' that they

'Were, as God had made them, free.'

The tyrants would then pour around them

'Troops of armed emblazonry'.

But the assembly must stand calm and resolute,

'Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war.'

Panic must pass,

'a disregarded shade,
Through their phalanx undismayed.'

And if then the tyrants dare

'Let them ride among you there,
Slash and stab and maim and hew,—
What they like, that let them do.
With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away.'

Then they will return with shame to the place from which they came,

'And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.'

Every woman in the land will point the finger of scorn at them as they stand. 'They will hardly dare to greet their acquaintance in the street'.

'And the bold, true, warriors
Who have hugged Danger in wars
Will turn to those who would be free
Ashamed of such base company.'

That slaughter shall steam up like inspiration to the Nation, eloquent, oracular: a volcano heard afar. And the doom of oppression will be proclaimed by the following words which will ring through each heart and brain,

Heard again–again–again:
'Rise, like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you.
Ye are many—they are few.'

Poona, 23-2-'46 V. G. D.

Notes

The National Week

The National Week is intended to be observed as a week of introspection and prayer, the latter including service through constructive work. The 6th and 13th of April, marking its opening and close were observed in Gandhiji's camp by fasting and common spinning. In the latter 183 spinners including several members of the Working Committee took part on the last day. Gandhiji delivered the message of the National Week in two discourses at the evening prayer gathering on the 6th and 13th of April respectively. The text of these discourses will be found reproduced elsewhere in this issue.

New Delhi, 16-4-'46 P.

A Request

Change of address to be effective for the week should please be intimated to us *by Tuesday*. The subscriber number should be quoted with the intimation.

Please note that change of address cannot be effected *within one month*.

Subscribers are not enrolled for a period of less than six months.

J. DESAI

KHADI IN TAMILNAD, 1944-45

We have received a copy of the Annual Report for 1944-45 of the Tamilnad Branch of the All India Spinners' Association, Tirupur. It is in the fitness of things that it has been printed on hand-made paper manufactured by the Branch itself.

During the year under report Tamilnad produced Khadi worth Rs. 32 lakhs and sold Khadi of the value of Rs. 36 lakhs out of which the province itself consumed Khadi worth Rs. 32 lakhs. It ministered to about 75,000 spinners, about 2,500 weavers and about 500 other artisans in about 3,500 villages among whom it distributed Rs. 21 lakhs as wages, while the total salaries paid to the staff (440 people) amounted to only Rs. 1½ lakhs. In fact when we purchase a rupee worth of Tamilnad Khadi, we spend 2 annas for the cotton, 12 annas as a charge for carding and other processes up to weaving and 2 annas for all overhead charges including freight, packing and establishment. We suggest that when the report for next year is published, it should also supply the corresponding figures for mill cloth. Seventy-five per cent of the Khadi produced by the Branch was made in Coimbatore district alone.

In 1923 Tamilnad produced Khadi worth less than Rs. 5 lakhs, compared with the present figure of Rs. 32 lakhs. Allowing for wartime inflation, it will be safe to say that the province has trebled its output in 22 years. [Khadi production year by year should be shown in square yards as well as in rupees]. In fact Tamilnad at present is the biggest producer of Khadi (30 lakhs of square yards) among all the provinces, the second biggest being Bihar which however produces less than half the Khadi manufactured by Tamilnad, *i. e.* about 12½ lakhs of square yards. Maharashtra and the United Provinces are the rest of the Big Four.

What a pity that after a quarter of a century of Khadi production under wise and able guidance the Tamilnad Branch has not still succeeded in overcoming what it calls the 'persistent tendency of the weavers to prefer mill yarn when available to hand-spun yarn and to take to the latter when mill yarn is not available'! According to the report this tendency mainly accounts for the rise and fall in production and is a limiting factor in the progress of the Khadi movement.

A chain can never be stronger than its weakest link. If we take care of every single link, the chain will take care of itself. It is high time the workers of the A. I. S. A. took to the method of doubling and twisting yarn even in the process of unwinding the cone on the spindle. This can compete fully with any mill-spun yarn.

As regards sales, we note that out of over Rs. 33 lakhs worth of Khadi sold in 1944, rural areas accounted for less than Rs. 4 lakhs. According to the 'new dispensation', we have to aim at disposing of our entire output in villages, the spinners and weavers themselves being Khadi-clad.

We commend one new feature of Khadi production in Tamilnad to workers in charge of other provinces, *viz.* that out of 6 lakhs lbs. of cotton consumed in a year, only a third was supplied by the A. I. S. A., the remaining two thirds being the spinners' own. This enabled the Branch to effect a considerable saving in capital required for stocking cotton.

The Khadi woven for self-sufficient spinners was less than 10,000 square yards in 18 months. Self-spinners' yarn was worse than the yarn spun for wages, so that weavers would not weave it at scheduled rates.

The Branch conducted cheap grain stores and classes in spinning on the Magan Charkha. We would have welcomed more details about the working of these classes.

Gandhiji's *Sayings on the welfare of women* compiled by Shri Shankarlal Banker was distributed to the artisans free of charge.

The Branch collected 75,000 hanks of yarn worth over Rs. 11,000 for the Kasturba Fund.

Exhibitions were organized in connection with fairs and were visited by two lakhs of people. These were so designed as to stress and demonstrate the crafts rather than merely dispose of Khadi stocks.

The Shankarlal Charkha Works at Tirupur produced implements and accessories of the value of about Rs. 1,25,000 in 18 months.

Jamnalal Vidyalaya undertook an experiment in sericulture and produced 18 lbs. of Endi silk cocoons which were also spun and woven at the same institution.

Let us close this notice of the report with a paragraph in it which explains the re-orientation of Khadi in a few words:

> "Spinning is not for wages but in order to meet our own clothing requirements. Khadi is not a commodity for sale but for consumption by the spinner himself. Every spinner should wear Khadi and every Khadi wearer should spin. The spinning wheel is a symbol of *ahimsa,* and it aims at creating a non-violent society free from all forms of exploitation."

V. G. D.

SIGNS OF THE TIME

Addressing the evening prayer gathering on the Jallianwala Bagh day Gandhiji said:

"Today is the last day of the National Week which I have also called the Sacred Week. It was on this day that the tragedy of the Jallianwala Bagh was enacted. The 6th of April saw the birh of Satyagraha in India. The awakening among the masses resulting from it was so phenomenal that the Government could suppress it only by having recourse to the method of frightfulness. It culminated in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre when Gen. Dyer with a party of fifty sepoys opened fire on an unarmed and peaceful gathering, resulting in the death of at least 500 people and the wounding of thrice that number. There was only one exit and it was held by the firing party so that the innocent men and women who were trapped there had no alternative but to be shot down like rabbits in a hole. It is true some excesses were committed by the mob before the massacre. But they were nothing as compared to the savage reprisals taken by the Government. That is the way of all imperialisms. In no other way could a handful of foreigners maintain their rule over a nation of 400 millions.

"Why have I recalled these incidents? Not to stir up bitter, old memories or to keep alive the

embers of hatred, but only to emphasize the distinction between the old order which they symbolized and the new that is in sight. I have not the slightest doubt as to the *bona fides* of the Cabinet Mission. I am convinced that they have finally made up their mind to withdraw *in toto*. The question which is exercising their minds is how to effect the withdrawal in an orderly manner and to that end their energies are bent. Gentlemanliness requires that if a person is sincerely trying to make amends he should be thanked and congratulated for it, not that his past should be flung in his face.

"You know Shri Jaiprakash Narain and Dr. Lohia. Both of them are daring men of action and scholars. They could easily have become rich. But they chose the way of renunciation and service. To break the chains of their country's slavery was their one passion. Naturally the alien Government regarded them as dangerous to its existence and put them into prison. We, however, have different scales to weigh merit and we regard them as patriots who have sacrificed their all for the love of the country which has given them birth. That they would be found wanting in the scales of non-violence is irrelevant today. What is relevant is that independence of India is today common ground between the British and ourselves. Their freedom, therefore, is no longer considered dangerous by the Government. Viewed in that light, their release as also the release of the I. N. A. men yesterday must be regarded as an earnest of the honesty of the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy. We must be thankful to them for this earnest, and prayer of thankfulness should ascend to heaven for the wisdom with which God seems to be endowing them.

"The Satyagraha Week which is closing today is devoted always to communal unity and Khaddar. Communal unity is not confined to Hindus and Muslims only, it extends to all including Englishmen. It must not become a menace to anybody or group. That is the message of non-violence.

"The National Week is a week of self-introspection and prayer. Prayer is not for the impure in heart."

New Delhi, 15-4-'46 PYARELAL

"ROMAN URDU"

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

If there is Roman Urdu, why not Roman Hindi? The next step will be to romanize the alphabets of all the languages of India. They have done this for Zulu which had no alphabet of its own. The attempt in India would be on a par with the attempt to foist Esperanto on the world. It cannot succeed in the near future. Believers in the Roman script in the place of all the known Indian scripts will have a circle of adherents but the movement cannot permeate the masses. It should not. Crores of people need not become so lazy as not to learn their own respective scripts. A laudable attempt is being made not to replace the alphabets in vogue in India but to teach Nagari in addition in the hope that in course of time millions may learn to read the Indian languages in the Nagari character. And since Urdu characters cannot for well known reasons be replaced by Nagari, it should be learnt by all the patriots who love their country too well to find the learning of the Urdu alphabet a burden. All these attempts seem to me to be worthy.

With all my readiness to grasp new ideas, I have failed to find a substantial reason for inducing the spread of the Roman alphabet for the purpose of replacing the Nagari or Urdu scripts. It is true that in the Indian Army the Roman alphabet has been largely used. I should hope that the Indian soldier, if he is saturated with the national spirit, will not mind learning both Nagari and Urdu characters. After all, amid the ocean of Indian humanity, the Indian soldier is a mere drop. He must shed the English mode. Probably the reason for romanizing Urdu will be found in the English officer being too lazy to learn to read Urdu or Nagari characters.

New Delhi, 15-4-'46

HE LIVES

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Death has removed not only from us but from the world one of India's best sons. That he loved India passionately, every one who knew him could see. When I saw him last in Madras, he could talk of nothing but India and her culture for which he lived and died. I am sure that he had no thought of himself even when he seemed to be on his deathbed. His Sanskrit learning was as great if not greater than his English. I must not permit myself to say more, save this that though we differed in politics our hearts were one and I could never think that his patriotism was less than that of the tallest patriot. Sastri the man lives though his body is reduced to ashes.

New Delhi, 18-4-'46

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